

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 79th ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD ON 1st, 2nd AND 3rd APRIL 1983

(To be read in conjunction with the Final Agenda)

ATTENDANCES:	No. of Branches Represented	No. of Delegates Sitting	Branches not Represented
Friday 1st April 11a.m.	15	28	Birmingham
" " " 3.50p.m.	15	31	Sunderland Glasgow
Saturday 2nd April 3.30p.m.	15	28	Sunderland Kensington
Sunday 3rd April 12.15p.m.	16	29	Sunderland
" " " 3.30p.m.	16	31	Sunderland

Financial Report

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Collections: Friday (day)	67.58½	Hall Hire	135.00
Friday (evening meeting)	21.25	Delegates' expenses	90.00
Saturday	36.27½	Canteen purchases	89.42
Sunday	47.95		
Canteen takings:	119.62		
Total Income:	292.68	Total expenditure:	314.42

Book Sales £ 26.20

Literature Sales £100.07

Total £126.27

£31.50 was also taken for copies of Cde. Montague's book, "Frank Faces of the Dead", which will be forwarded to those members who have ordered them, when the books have been received from the publishers.

General Secretary

REPORT OF 79th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1983

1970-79
FRIDAY 1st APRIL - 10.15 a.m.

Nominations received for Chairman: P. Bennett (Central), H. Valour (Glasgow) and R. Donnelly (Glasgow - not present).
For Vice-Chairman: C. Skelton (Central - not present).

The delegates then elected P. Bennett as Chairman and H. Valour as Vice-Chairman.

It was agreed that Standing Order Committee act as Tellers.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION - C. Slapper (Islington) and Cottis (Southend): "That the items on Propaganda and Publicity be taken as first business on Sunday afternoon."

CARRIED 7 - 4

Com. C. Slapper asked whether branch verbal reports could be given special time as that item was not on the agenda. It was generally agreed that they could arise under 'other business'.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE

Rule 1: (Kensington Branch) "On line 12 (start of 2nd para.), delete 'two years' and replace with 'five years'."

CARRIED 23 - 13

Rule 2: (Islington resolution, Glasgow and Bolton amendments):

Bond (Islington): In spite of having £25,000, the Party expenditure is about £5,000 a year and we need to increase income by increasing dues.

McLaughlan (Bolton): 80p is not enough. Glasgow's amendment shows they do not want to increase dues at all.

Lawrence (Croydon): We support the increase to £1 but if that is lost we want some increase.

May (N.W. London): How are Central Branch members voting?

Standing Orders: 30 voting papers were returned plus one spoiled paper.

BOLTON AMENDMENT LOST 16 - 19

GLASGOW AMENDMENT LOST 9 - 26

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION CARRIED 20 - 15

Rule 3: (Kensington):

R. Critchfield (Kensington): Members of branches often live at great distances; members falling out with one another often take refuge in another branch, the ultimate refuge being Central Branch. The Party could make it more difficult to belong to CB. The Bolton amendment would leave the situation as it is now.

McLaughlan (Bolton): We agree with discouraging members from transferring to CB. Amendment deals with branches winding up.

Morgan (Islington): Branch disapproves of too much legislation and thinks the present situation is satisfactory.

Hopwood (Croydon): We oppose the resolution but members should be aware that CB is getting very unwieldy and has increased since the Master Form 'C', partly because of Paddington Branch winding up. Half the members of the Party are in CB. It is getting very expensive to run: CB members get a service no other members get and they return only 30 voting papers. CB members should examine their consciences.

Skelton (Central): Former member of various London Branches. Locality is not the only reason why members cannot attend branch meetings. We are attracting, through advertising, people who have no local branch. Impossible to implement the resolution.

Marshall (East London): Nearest branch for Southend members, if branch wound up, would be East London.

Goodman (EC/Kensington): Proviso "except on application to and by authorisation of the EC". Extra cost of members who wish to become inactive CB members should be curtailed.

Atkinson (General Secretary/EC): Rule 11 says "... who, for approved reasons, prefer not to join a local Branch ..." Members from wound-up branches are being automatically transferred to CB: new members joining through Forms 'A' Scrutiny Committee are coming before the EC.

McLaughlan (Bolton): CB will grow because more members are joining the Party outside London: it is members who are near other branches we are concerned about.

R. Critchfield (Kensington): Party has grown slack about this and is not conforming to the rules. This is a step towards clearing up this matter.

BOLTON AMENDMENT LOST 9 - 28

KENSINGTON RESOLUTION LOST 13 - 25

Rule 12 (Glasgow and Croydon Resolutions):

Vanni (Glasgow): We raise this again because at the last EC elections there were only 12 nominations for 14 places. There is no essential need for 14 EC members - it is large for our total membership. The membership is not getting a choice as all who are nominated get on. Some candidates in the second ballot for the vacancies got more votes than some who got on the EC at the first ballot.

Hopwood (Croydon): Two of the candidates in the second ballot had declined nomination for the first ballot. I understand there were originally a secretary and treasurer with 12 other members to form the EC. 10 is too few - with tendency for more EC members from outside London, during travel difficulties we would be in trouble over numbers. We suggest 12 with secretary and treasurer in attendance.

G. Slapper (Islington): The greater reduction in size of the EC the better. The function should be simply to implement the will of the Party.

May (N.W. London): N.W. London Branch think 14 members discussing important items can arrive at a solution which should reflect the membership of the Party: can bring a much greater amount of knowledge and experience than a smaller number. Sometimes four can be absent from a meeting. If you reduce the number to 10 and four are absent, six members would deal with the business.

Marshall (East London): I expected to hear a clear statement why 14 members are not satisfactory. What I have heard gives more reason for not supporting it.

Skelton (Central): Members should be concerned about the numbers not standing. It is because a number refuse nomination.

Vanni (Glasgow): Glasgow doesn't see anything wrong with 14 members, if you can get them. Members have not answered the point that there has been a steady decline over the years in the numbers standing.

CROYDON RESOLUTION LOST 17 - 24
GLASGOW RESOLUTION LOST 16 - 26

Rule 13: GLASGOW RESOLUTION LOST 7 - 29

C. Slapper (Islington): Queried the time-table of receipt by branches of agendas, reports, etc.

Sansum (S.W. London): EC report to Conference contains a number of "No report to hand" comments. What reports have subsequently come to hand?

Atkinson (General Secretary): Only one, from the Forms 'A' Scrutiny Committee, and the Financial Statement for 1982.

Hopwood (Croydon): Pointed out that Birmingham delegate was now sitting but that their Form 'C' had not been received.

Cook (Birmingham): Understood that it had been sent. Difficulties since death of Branch Treasurer.

Atkinson (General Secretary): Several branch Forms 'C' were received late and more leeway had been given than perhaps should have been.

RESOLUTION - Hopwood (Croydon) and R. Cox (Guildford): "That permission be given to Birmingham delegate to sit."

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Lawrence (Croydon): Complacency of branches re Forms 'C' is causing a fair amount of dislocation and difficulty in the Party. It upsets the timetable for getting out the Conference material and limits opportunities for branches to fully consider the agenda. Disturbs the democratic process. Preparing the Form 'C' does not take long and if it does, it means the branch books are in a mess. I think we ought to censure these branches.

RESOLUTION - Lawrence (Croydon) and Cottis (Southend): "That this Conference censures Edinburgh, Guildford and N.E. Branches for their failure to submit Forms 'C' in time."

CARRIED 12 - 7

E.C. REPORT TO CONFERENCE, RESOLUTIONS AND ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Party Elections/Ballots - Resolutions (a), (b) and (c) on Agenda:

C. Slapper (Islington): It is not very democratic for members to have to vote without knowing who they are voting for and some members, particularly outside London, have said recently they were unable to vote for this reason. This explains low voting. Statements should be left to Branches.

Vanni (Glasgow): The job should not be done by the branch. If it is a questionnaire, there could be no doubt whether it is factual or not and avoid fixing the number of words. Glasgow's amendment should have the word 'therefore' between the words 'Conference' and 'recommends'.

R. Best (Bolton): A restricted number of words would make it ridiculous: there is no information as to what would happen to these papers.

Hopwood (Croydon): On reflection, Croydon would agree that 30 words were not enough. We don't think people should promote themselves - it is against the spirit of the Socialist Party.

R. Critchfield (Kensington): If several branches nominated the same member, you would

get several write-ups. It has to be approached with a great deal of care. Not to be manifesto but relevant to their membership of the Party.

Cook (Birmingham): Branch uneasy about this. Real aim should be to reduce the powers of the EC and make it a rubber stamp, but because it still has power, we should know nominees.

Edwards (West London): Not in favour of write-ups because of trade union experience where only good points are mentioned. We would still not be in a position to choose because they would all be sound Party members.

Young (EC): Appealed to members to have nothing to do with this ridiculous anti-Socialist idea which stems from the capitalist electoral system where people struggled for jobs. It is the cult of personality.

May (N.W. London): We oppose the lot. We would have a very large piece of material containing numerous personal biographies. How would you know my own biographical statement was correct? If branches write up these things you would have to have a branch vote on it. I would like to see a draft of the Glasgow pro-forma. We all hope EC members will do their best; if they don't, they will be challenged. If you just want rubber stamp people, just draw them out of a hat.

Goodman (EC): I am not concerned about members who are well-known but about members who cannot vote because they don't know candidates. Members vote for the names they know. It is true representative democracy to give members the chance to know who they vote for.

Coleman (EC): Choice must be made on knowing something. Majority of membership now outside London; you must give members who do not know London members the choice. A serious election system means having information.

May (N.W. London): Members don't vote because they are not interested, for some reason.

Skelton (Central): I was often approached at H.O. by members about names on the EC. People with a lot of work in the Party would be at an advantage over those who had not done a lot.

Marshall (East London): In the trade unions people still asked questions, having statements about candidates. I don't think it made very much difference how much information was given.

Mostyn (Central): I take on trust that once a member has been admitted to the Party, he is acting in the interests of advancing Socialism. It is a piece of bureaucracy which the Party could do without. There would be no end to it - photograph, etc.

Cook (Birmingham): I would be happier if such ideas could be for a trial period.

C. Slapper (Islington): There is no contradiction between wanting EC members to be rubber stamps and wanting to have a choice in who we are electing. Islington envisages statements including members' propaganda activities.

(a) BOLTON AMENDMENT LOST 20 - 23

GLASGOW ADDENDUM LOST 17 - 27

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION CARRIED 22 - 21

(b) ISLINGTON AMENDMENT LOST 18 - 21

CROYDON RESOLUTION LOST 3 - 36

Hopwood (Ballot Committee): Asked whether Conference wants the committee to present something to the EC on how to operate this.

Atkinson (General Secretary): Ballot Committee would have to decide what "short factual statement" meant and come to the EC for guidance but the EC would need guidance on the matter. In the past the EC had to decide on the length of branch resolutions to the EC.

Lawrence (Croydon): We don't want the EC to mess about with these statements.

C. Slapper (Islington): It should be the branch's responsibility to produce a statement and submit it to the ballot committee.

Delegates agreed not to vote on Resolution (c) Kensington.

Valinas (Standing Orders) suggested the EC would deal with this resolution and lay down guidelines.

RESOLUTION - McLaughlan (Bolton) and Hopwood (Croydon): "That the Auditors' Report be dealt with first thing after lunch."

AGREED

HEAD OFFICE, BRANCHES AND ORGANISATION:

MASTER FORM 'C':

May (N.W. London): Referred to errors relating to N.W. London and Camden branches. The Camden figures seemed to refer to the first half-year only.

RESOLUTION (c) (East London): "That this Conference agrees that Forms 'C' should be completed to show outstanding accounts re dues and literature."

CARRIED 31 - 10

CENTRAL ORGANISER'S REPORT

C. Slapper (Islington): Branch very concerned th the fact that the present Central Organiser is not at Conference and feel that a large part of his function is the

Organisation of Conference.

RESOLUTION (b) Islington: (re Head Office Organiser):

G. Slapper (Islington): Referred to report of the Ad Hoc Committee which made very clear ways in which this help could be used. Most of the work would be connected with propaganda.

McLaughlan (Bolton): We were concerned in the amendment with the H.O.O. as a sub-committee of the EC should be appointed at the same time as all sub-committees.

Edwards (West London): Cost would be at least £5,000 p.a. Unless we get legacies we will be spending more than we are receiving.

Atkinson (Ad Hoc Committee): If we entered into employer/employee relationship, as well as a salary there would be NI contributions, Tax, etc. Someone doing this job could be responsible themselves on a contractual basis. Treasurer thought we should stick to employer/employee relationship. It is indisputable that we need a Head Office Organiser. Increase in enquiries at H.O. which is now open three days a week. Delegates would have to decide on the financial side if they approved of the recommendation.

Hopwood (Croydon): Branch thought that instead of one person being appointed, a team of members who would be paid substantial expenses.

Waite (Treasurer): How much was proposed for the pay of such a member?

May (N.W. London): I am more interested in a full-time propagandist. What does 'a lot more enquiries' mean? Can we have the existing Head Office Assistant being at H.O. three days and call for volunteers for the other two days of the week. Look at the financial report. Last year you spent more than you got in, apart from the legacy. What about nominees giving up their job. The job might then go, on an election, to another member. It must have some security of tenure. We are not opposed in principle but it needs a lot more thought on the administration side.

Skelton (Central): Previously this idea had been put forward in relation to growth of the Party. We have in fact had a net loss of members in the year. Cost would be more than was spent on leaflets, etc. If it is just to answer the phone why not have an answering machine.

Goodman (EC): Obviously good to man H.O. all the week, but difficulties of employer/employee relationship - what happens if member not satisfactory - do we sack him?

G. Slapper (Islington): We prefer payment on an expense basis. We stand to improve our funds with increased dues by nearly £2,000 p.a.

RESOLUTION (b) - AMENDMENT - BOLTON LOST 9 - 34

AMENDMENT - ISLINGTON LOST 12 - 27

RESOLUTION - ISLINGTON LOST 16 - 23

Letters of Greeting were read from the Acting Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada and from the WSP of Australia - members in Perth. The Australian members are meeting in Melbourne at Easter.

Com. L. Fenton of the WSP of US was present and then addressed the Conference.

Auditors' Report:

E. Walters (Auditor): Read a statement apologising that Rule 15 had been broken in that the Financial Statement had not been presented in accordance with the Rule. The Treasurer submitted the account books to the Auditors in January but with no financial statement which she is obliged to do. We referred it back to her in mid-February and received completed balance sheet about a fortnight ago - not giving enough time to have it audited, typed and sent out to branches before Conference.

A. Waite (Treasurer): Has been Treasurer for nearly 20 years and the Auditors have prepared the financial statement from the books, receipts, etc. She read a letter from the Auditors when they stated they were unable to audit the books. She then spent a day with Com. A. Kerr, a former Auditor, drawing up a statement of account. Com. Waite also read a letter from Coms. A. and G. Kerr outlining the method of accounting and auditing over many years. Com. Waite said the first six months' account when the new Auditors took over, was incorrect.

May (N.W. London): As long as the money is there, that's all that matters. We can't discuss book-keeping methods here. We have spent a lot more than our normal income - legacy excepted. Loss on the SS has increased: the increase in price I am told produces some sales resistance. Expenditure on propaganda was only 1% of total expenditure - there is something wrong here.

C. Slapper (Islington): The financial position of the Party is far from being secure for the future. The answer must lie in the direction of increasing income rather than cutting back on expenditure. The more activity we have organised in Islington, the more money in the long term has come in. If enough literature is sold it can make a profit. The new Irish pamphlet published yesterday at 30p selling price would produce profit if 5,000 sold.

Hopwood (Croydon): At ADM, Croydon asked about the item 'Conference Expenses' of over £400 and did not get a very satisfactory answer. I still ask that question. I suggest that the book-keeping is a bit inaccurate. Part of the item probably relates to the

previous item of 'Propaganda'. Perhaps the Treasurer and Auditors could look into this. Would also like a breakdown of admin. expenses at H.O.: how could they have risen by £1,000?

70-79
Waite (Treasurer): Conference expenses includes delegates' expenses and hall hire.

E. Walters (Auditor): Administrative expenses includes sub-committee fares, which have increased. Rates have more than doubled. We had this on the balance sheet but there were no receipts.

D. Davies (N.W. London): It seems the Auditors feel they should not make up the balance sheet: they have in the past - that is their job. It should be a check on the Treasurer for the Auditors to draw up the financial statement.

Atkinson (General Secretary/EC): Since Com. Lake's time the Auditors have made out the balance statement, audited it and then told you it is OK. It is in the Treasurer's terms of reference and in Rule 15 that it is the Treasurer's task. My task is to see that the EC has a financial statement to put before Conference. I was unable to do this this year. If the books are presented with a balance statement the Auditors should be able to do the work in about 5 hours. You have to resolve this or it will make the secretary's job impossible.

Roberts (Central/former Auditor): In my experience as a senior audit clerk for accountants it was not uncommon for Auditors to draw up balance sheets. A treasurer or secretary can make errors and it is the job of auditors to find them. I don't see why the Auditors did not present a list of queries to the Treasurer and sit down to sort them out. We did not have terms of reference and I have never read the rule which has been mentioned.

RESOLUTION - May and D. Davies (N.W. London): "That this Conference recommends the EC to ask two members who are conversant with book-keeping practice to draw up the most simple methods for the Party to keep its records."

The terms of reference for the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and for the Auditors were then read.

May (N.W. London): I think it is time we looked at the method of keeping our books. We need more detail. Some of the figures shown tell us nothing. We need more sub-headings.

D. Davies (N.W. London): My accountant takes my figures and draws up a balance sheet. Once we have a method of drawing up accounts the EC can draw up terms of reference.

Lawrence (Croydon): I am not happy with this resolution which conflicts with an instructed Conference resolution which formulated terms of reference covering the points at issue very precisely. "The Treasurer to keep the records" should mean that at any time you can see the pattern of Party expenditure. At the moment this is impossible. Terms of reference also specific in regard to the Treasurer preparing a financial statement on the basis of up-to-date records. If the auditors prepare and audit the financial statement - who then audits the auditors? Also we have the situation where branches cannot consider the financial statement in time for Conference.

D. Chesham (EC): The resolution is totally superfluous. What we want is the implementation of the terms of reference of the Treasurer. There is no comparison with company secretaries and the job of the Party's Treasurer. We have a treasurer specifically appointed to draw up a financial statement - under Rule 15 and it is the responsibility of the auditors to see that these items are correct when they audit. There should be no problem.

Skelton (Central): This has raised more problems i.e. whether last year's accounts were properly entered. You have to check five books. The Auditor's job is to ask questions and seek answers. I would like the figures going to branches to be correct: I would like to think that we have auditors doing the job.

H. Walters (Islington): Rule 15 has not substantially altered over the years in relation to Auditors. It seems to have been included at the Party's inception. Job of the Auditors is to look at the statement prepared by the Treasurer. Some members think we should not be concerned with money in this way. If you don't want auditors, get rid of them - change the rule. You have got to have proper book-keeping and that seems to me not to be happening.

Edwards (West London): If each item has to be entered five times, then it seems the resolution is worthwhile.

G. Wilson (S.W. London): The Secretary and Treasurer could deal with accounts on a monthly basis.

May (N.W. London): This does not conflict with the terms of reference but is for members to put forward recommendations.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 17 - 5

Com. D. Davies (N.W. London) offered to be one of the two members and said she is a trained book-keeper.

RESOLUTION - Lawrence and Hopwood (Croydon): "That this Conference deplores the fact that the financial statement was not presented to branches before Conference and affirms that the existing terms of reference affecting the Treasurer and the Auditors be adhered to."

Lawrence (Croydon): I take the point of looking at better ways of keeping the accounts.

However, Conference has not had a statement, which is because of confusion between the Treasurer and Auditors and in order to settle who does what let's stick to the terms of reference.

Atkinson (General Secretary): Normally a complete set of terms of reference of sub-committees and Party Officers are sent to branches, but the EC has amended several this year and when finalised they will be sent out.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 27 - 0

Lawrence (Croydon): I have wondered whether we are spending a lot on literature. We don't want to get into the frame of mind of curtailing propaganda. We have gradually increased the size of the SS to 18,000 words. Does this increase really enhance our propaganda work? We could go back to 14,000-word SS.

Moss (Swansea): The resolution just passed seems to preclude discussion as the statement of account was not distributed in time for branch consideration and delegates are not here to give personal views.

RESOLUTION - Moss (Swansea) and H. Cottis (Southend): "Next business."

CARRIED 18 - 7

Delegates agreed to start Saturday session at 2 p.m. instead of 1 p.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Resolution - Croydon Branch and amendment - Kensington Branch

Lawrence (Croydon): Rules 15 and 17 are very specific - it is the way we administer the Party - by delegated function. Decisions formed in branches by majorities - delegates bound to give effect to branch instructions. We set aside our personal views and act strictly in accordance with branch instructions. Conference forms Party instruction and lands up on the EC table where the same constraints apply. This means those EC members must and are bound to set aside their personal views. They have already participated at branch level in the making of decisions. Members standing for the EC signify their intention and members vote for them on the understanding that this is how they behave. We are referring here to a member of the EC last year, Com. Young, who said there was no possible way in which he could implement a Party decision re printing of pamphlets. He did offer to resign and it was said by some that he had no reason to resign because he was only one member and was in a minority and the rule did not refer to individual members of the EC but to a majority. He has therefore used the EC ever since as a platform for his personal views. The amendment emasculates this resolution.

R. Critchfield (Kensington): The amendment strengthens the resolution because if a member of the EC votes against a Party decision he will automatically lapse from the EC. We do not regard EC members as rubber stamps and there should be some sort of allowance made so they can abstain.

C. Atkinson (Islington): We support the resolution for the reasons given by Com. Lawrence.

Edwards (West London): EC in the past always carried out instructed resolutions but were not bound to carry out recommendations - floor resolutions - on which delegates are not instructed. It would be wrong for the EC to carry these out. Time could be wasted on resolutions at the EC table asking members to resign.

Young (EC): You have got my resignation now. I am much more artful off it than on it. I claim intelligence and find myself unable to confirm the publication of documents in the name of the EC which I am not allowed to read. You won't have an EC but robots.

Coleman (EC): If you are on the EC and cannot carry out what Conference tells you to do you should not be on that EC. If you disagree then you should enter into the membership of the Party and attempt to make your views the majority ones. You should resign if you cannot carry out the wishes of the Party. You cannot support six of the eight principles. If I were in that position I would do the honourable thing and resign and be democratic - not in rhetoric, but where it counts, in practice.

May (N.W. London): Branch opposed as it feels Conference should not have to have an instructed resolution saying what a rule means - it should be in the Rule Book. It should be quite specific and no need for interpretation. If EC members do not agree with a resolution they should resign. For years, Lake voted against Parliamentary activity but the EC as a whole voted for it. I voted against the publication of 'Is a Third World War Inevitable' which contained errors. We don't go to the EC to be obstructive. If the EC is doing things the majority of the Party does not want, then the Party can deal with it: you don't vote for them next year. If they have the right to, 8 abstentions is democratic. Are you happy about that? We have to look at the EC as an administrative body.

Cook (Birmingham): There is an emphasis on the work of the EC which worries Birmingham branch. It is an executive committee - one which implements - not one which decides policy.

C. Slapper (Islington): There is an assumption that May and other members are absolutely right where production of literature is concerned. It is not that clear. Errors exist in various pieces of Party literature. Every month, Young votes for the production of the SS although he does try to keep the print-run as low as possible.

Marshall (East London): A pity that personalities have arisen: It is an important issue. I have heard arguments and had to vote in a particular way and report back to the branch.

After a resolution has been passed at Conference it may be found by some members to be something they disagree with.

1970-79
Vanni (Glasgow): Voting against resolution although some sympathy as both are inadequate. They omit the word "instructed". There must be some provision for accommodating an EC member who genuinely feels he must vote against a Conference instructed resolution. Last year's Croydon resolution was a better attempt. If two or four or six members do it, it is not OK. It does matter what an individual member does. We could not put up with a situation like that. In the long run something must be done about this.

D. Davies (N.W. London): You must change the rule and not leave it as the instructed resolution. A 1973 resolution states that the EC does have the right to interpret the meaning of Rules, Conference Resolutions and Party Poll results.

Goodman (EC): Last year's Conference, by amending Islington's resolution, made it impossible to know what to do with pamphlets between 10,001 and 20,000 words long. I moved a resolution recently at the EC asking for Party guidance. Interpretation can never be opposition. If Conference carries this resolution, it can change the rule next year. You cannot separate responsibility of EC members from the EC as a whole. Each member has the responsibility of carrying out the Party's decisions.

Wood (Central): What about floor resolutions: do the movers include these?

Valinas (Central): "give effect to" does not make distinction between instructed and floor resolutions.

Cottis (Southend): Floor resolutions not binding.

Howell (EC): A pious resolution. So many conference resolutions are sloppily worded and there is no final arbiter on the EC to decide the final meaning. On the biographical statements, members can include statements on how they will vote at the EC.

Skelton (Central): Conference can be wrong and inconsistent. EC members' thinking is not going to change if a resolution is passed. The majority will implement Party Rules and Party Polls. It has not been thought necessary before to pass such a resolution. The present EC has not abided by Conference decision on vetting pamphlets of a certain length.

Chesham (EC): You have to pay the penalty for democracy in the risk of Conference passing a wrong decision. The place to put forward your opposition is the Branch. The alternative is for individuals to put forward their own point of view on the EC as other political parties operate. Trouble in the Party a few years ago said by some to be personality matters, was this same subject of political democracy. The central issue is whether you accept the democratic principle or not.

Atkinson (Genral Secretary/EC): The EC's present action over the Irish pamphlet was correct in the light of the facts.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Read the 1982 Conference resolution and said the EC were therefore wrong.

L. Fenton (WSP/US): Addressed the principles rather than listening to the strong vibrations. That the will of the majority prevails is overriding in the carrying on of the Party's case, no-one will deny. The discussion smacks of heresy-hunting. We are approaching 1984 where Orwell spoke of double-speak. We are talking double-speak when we say if you don't do such-and-such, you resign instantly. There can be disagreements, but circumstances alter cases, but on individual performances you would have to make a stand. The minority must have the right of expression as well. I would say it is stupid to call for the resignation.

R. Critchfield (Kensington): I am surprised at the change of attitude on the part of some branches since last year. The EC is an executive committee and carries out the wishes of the Party.

Lawrence (Croydon): The wording of the resolution was taken from Rule 15 and 17, no distinction being made between instructed and floor resolutions. People can disagree - it is how they act. EC members are bound by delegated function to implement decisions. Delegates may disagree with their branch decisions but have to vote as mandated. The alternative is total chaos. It is when the decisions go to the EC that we get the trouble. We want the same situation as between branches and conference where decisions are carried out.

KENSINGTON AMENDMENT LOST 8 - 33
CROYDON RESOLUTION LOST 18 - 25

RESOLUTION - Marshall and ?Crisp (East London): "That in the light of the Conference decision on Croydon Branch Resolution, Conference asks Com. Young to withdraw his resignation from the EC."

LOST 4 - 18

FORMS 'A' SCRUTINY REPORT - received late - was read.

Dale (for the Committee) answered points on numbers of applications received in the year. The Committee correspond with applicants and delays occur for a number of reasons, including applicants taking a long time to reply. Some are turned down on discovery that they are religious - one applicant was a member of the Labour Party.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:

C. Slapper (Islington): Drew Conference's attention to the admirable work done by the General Secretary, particularly in relation to the organisation of Conference in the

presence of the Central Organiser.

CENTRAL LITERATURE SALES COMMITTEE:

H. Walters (for the Committee): This year's committee has met and decided on certain lines of action. Are sending out a circular with regard to the sale and distribution of the SS.

Cottis (Southend): Great need for door-to-door selling of the SS - the virtue being that it doesn't cost anything.

R. Best (Bolton): Nobody from the committee under review is here to answer questions.

Dufton (CLSC 1983): We are stressing importance of door-to-door selling.

ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: No Committee extant.

GROUPS ORGANISER'S REPORT:

Lawrence (Croydon): Is it correct that Manchester Branch is being formed?

Atkinson (G.S.): Yes - the EC approved this recently.

ADJOURNMENT 6 p.m.

SATURDAY 2nd APRIL 1983

CENTRAL BRANCH: RESOLUTION - CROYDON BRANCH:

Lawrence (Croydon): Apologised for length of resolution but procedures had to be laid down. CB members have been pressing for more participation, to put items on the Agenda and to have delegation at Conference and ADM. Croydon gave a commitment to ADM to bring forward proposals on the understanding that ideas would come from CB members, but we did not hear anything from them.

Cottis (Southend): Branch think it could lead to CB dominating the Party so will vote against.

Hewitt (Central): There was an 11-point questionnaire which it was hoped would have been sent to CB members. Com. Johnson has made journeys to H.O. to discuss this but the whole matter was left in abeyance until Croydon raised it. Delegates should be encouraged to support the motion.

The Chairman asked Standing Orders how many CB members had voted for this. 32 papers were returned and the vote was 2 for and 1 against.

Atkinson (Croydon/Gen. Sec.): Croydon contacted Com. McNeeney for his comments. The Ad Hoc Committee discussed the question. Because of the enthusiasm shown by some CB members we tried to put something forward. The EC decided not to send out the proposed questionnaire but the Ad Hoc Committee sent it with its report to all branches and CB members.

Edwards (West London): This resolution seems to go part-way. Com. Johnson's contention was that CB was unrepresented but I still don't see how they could be even under Croydon's proposals because they don't meet.

H. Moss (Swansea): We will vote for this as a great deal of thought has gone into it and it goes a long way towards enfranchising CB members in a better way. They are clearly not taking an active part in Party affairs now.

May (N.W. London): We will vote against. Dilemma of past proposals to get rid of CB. Croydon ideas seem to be erecting CB as an on-going branch organisation rather than looking at ways of getting rid of it. Only 32 out of 170 CB members have voted despite their attention being drawn to this resolution. Their voting means 20 in favour and 10 against. Even with present situation it is possible for CB to dominate a conference. One or two snags. Voting strength to be in accordance with those participating in voting. Items could be submitted without any idea of what it was about. Views of CB members could be put forward when none of them had heard arguments for or against. Re CB Organiser having to be appointed first - if it's right let's do it and find the CBO afterwards.

Atkinson (Ad Hoc Committee): It was intended that the presentation and discussion of rules and items for agenda was to take place by those members who from the outset wished to participate in Conference business - not to have matters presented at Conference without discussion. There would be continual reference to each other between the interested members.

Hopwood (Croydon): Asked how many CB members were present, and through the Chair, it was established that 7 members of CB were present.

Lawrence (Croydon): The proposals relate to members of CB who participate - probably the same amount as now. You get this in all branches - low participation of members. CB proposals in sense more democratic because strictly in relation to the participating members. Discussion will be by correspondence between the members. It is not on that CB can be got rid of - it will grow, partly because propaganda methods are producing new members all over the country. There is a growing proportion of the membership not participating in the Party's affairs. The CB Organiser would have work to do in short bursts - if no-one was forthcoming you would have to revert to existing procedures.

RESOLUTION LOST 15 - 29

LIBRARY COMMITTEE:

1970-79
Hopwood (Croydon): Library is a white elephant - only half a dozen members use it. Provincial members can take books on extended loan. We should re-think - do we want a library - if so, let's use it or if not, let's sell off the books or something. It could be used by speakers preparing meetings, or as a reference library: we could have a travelling library box.

NPC:

May (N.W. London): Queried present position re draft pamphlet on Socialism which was in draft 2 years ago.

Coleman (NPC): Most of it written - it is the next pamphlet in line and will be ready for the EC by the end of the year. Three sections completed almost 2 years ago. One section is a long time coming.

May (N.W. London): Referred to new terms of reference and gap between 10,001 and 17,999 words-long pamphlets. Assumes anything over 10,000 words must be edited by the EC.

The Chairman then read the terms of reference of the NPC as amended by the 10th meeting of the 80th EC. (15th March 1983)

Atkinson (Gen. Sec./EC): The EC thought Conference should decide what to do with pamphlets between 10,000 and 20,000 words.

Cook (NPC): Question is of topicality not length - whether it is to be a stock pamphlet or not. Hoped delegates will bear this in mind. Apologised for his quick and incorrect estimate of number of words in Irish pamphlet.

C. Slapper (Islington): It seems that 1982 resolution (unamended) used the yardstick of the length of the SS. Options are that the wish of Conference was to bring the cut-off point down to 10,000 or that Conference was unsure or going back to the original cut-off point of the length of the SS. We do have the SSPC editing the SS each month.

Coleman (NPC): I don't think there is any problem. If it is under 10,000 words the NPC is bound to edit: if it is longer than the SS, the EC is bound to edit. Conference has left it open to the EC to make a decision on in-between length. If you only quote one clause out of a resolution it gives wrong impression. If in between the two figures, the EC decides on the basis of the content. Leave the ambiguity as it is.

May (N.W. London): You only have to read last year's Conference resolution. We took point of view that 10,000 was NPC's limit - ambiguous though it was, it was not left to the discretion of EC or NPC. Over 10,000 words was the job of the EC.

Lawrence (Croydon): Clause (ii) is clear. The grey area does exist. It is not clear that the EC must edit all pamphlets over 10,000 words, nor that the NPC shall only edit pamphlets under 10,000 words. I think a sensible solution would be to allow the area in between to be decided at the discretion of the EC.

Hopwood (Croydon): Some sloppily worded resolutions can come to the EC and be found not to work.

Vanni (Glasgow): Glasgow only noticed clause (iii) of the 1982 resolution. I would have thought it better if the EC had stuck to 10,000 words. We will have to go back to the branch: this will have to be resolved.

RESOLUTION - Lawrence and Hopwood (Croydon): "That this Conference recommends that the arrangements for editing pamphlets between 10,000 words and the length of the Socialist Standard be left to the discretion of the E.C."

Edwards (West London): This will not solve the problem. Perhaps it should be "topical" and not "length". Stock pamphlets more important than topical - but what is "stock" might then be arguable.

Moss (NPC): Appealed to delegates to leave things as they are. NPC is not a separate body from the EC but appointed by the EC. It should have confidence in its judgement as to whether it needs to be edited by the EC or not. Discretion, flexibility. Allow the NPC to recommend to the EC.

Cook (NPC): It took four full days to edit the Irish pamphlet. If you ask the EC to do this they would have to meet on four full days and that is where the discretion comes in.

May (N.W. London): Would the best solution be to circulate branches with the proposed terms of reference and let branches consider it, as it won't be called into use for a good while, according to the NPC.

Cottis (Southend): We value the work of this committee. We meant 10,000 words last year: we have to find a solution.

Coleman (NPC/EC): There is a vacuum between 10,000 and 18,000 words which is left to the discretion of the EC and this resolution logically endorses the instructed resolution which you as delegates are bound to endorse.

C. Slapper (Islington): The new pamphlet on Socialism will be over 18,000 words anyway. It would seem sense to adopt this resolution.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Why haven't any of you noticed that (ii) and (iii) of last year's resolution were in conflict. Why can't you all say the Conference made a mistake.

Young (EC): You are denying what was said yesterday about EC members having a mandate.

Easton (Croydon): I think Conference may have been careless last year and left an undecided area but this resolution does allow for more flexibility and the sensible thing

to vote for it.

Frederic (Croydon): You can have your own ideas about what the Party intended in the decisions it made but we have in front of us now a specific decision. There is nothing we can do here or the EC can do which conflicts with the terms of that resolution. There is no specific instruction between 10,000 and 18,000 words.

RESOLUTION CARRIED 20 - 4

C. Slapper (NPC): In reply to query about layout of Irish pamphlet, said the lay-out member decides on layout, illustrations etc., and number of pages, divisible by four. Old pamphlets sometimes had blank pages, but new pamphlet has illustrations and text arranged to avoid this.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS SECRETARY

C. Atkinson (Islington): As no report, asked how many overseas contacts had been made during the year.

A written report received late, was then read from Com. Pat Bentley.

Bradley (Haringey): In the past, our adverts said 'overseas enquiries invited', which produced a fair amount of overseas enquiries.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT:

Morgan (Islington): Branch have EC permission to contest the next general election and have been putting in a lot of work. They asked for as much help as possible. Cost would be in the region of £800 and donations are requested from branches and individuals.

Bretherton (Bolton): Branch has decided not to contest the next election for a number of reasons: some members have left the area, personal commitments of members have changed, and the branch has been directing its efforts towards helping groups in Manchester, Lancaster, etc. The success of these ventures has meant preparation for the election has dropped off. Membership of the branch has risen from 25 to 35 but they do not all live in the Bolton area. Branch still interested in contesting elections and offered help to other branches.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): The EC received this information from Bolton this week, and also the EC has agreed to the formation of a branch in Manchester.

Sansum (S.W. London): Asked what the Parliamentary Committee thought about Bolton not now contesting - surely it is very much a Party matter.

Dufton (Parliamentary Committee): This is a recent decision, and what is being discussed is the 1982 report.

Hopwood (Croydon): Disappointed that Bolton are not contesting. London members are not aware of the vast area Bolton members are covering. Some members who have not been further north than Watford should make a visit and talk to those members.

Grant (EC): It is a disappointment but the Branch have explained why: it is not a cop-out. They are working very hard in other directions. Any branch contesting an election has a Party-wide importance. Perhaps another non-London branch might consider contesting.

Coleman (EC): Suggested Bolton consider contesting in local elections and thus continue the work they have started in a local area.

Sansum (S.W. London): Although in 1983 and not in 1982 which is under discussion, S.W. London decided to work in the Bermondsey constituency but not to contest it. The experience did not augur well for the south of London contesting elections. Contesting Parliamentary seats is very rarely of benefit to the Party.

Buick (Haringey): Next March there will be European Parliament Elections. These have advantages of no deposit and large size of the constituencies. Should be discussed at ADM.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (6): N.W. LONDON:

May (N.W. London): In the past very keen on Parliamentary activity and referred to the 1945 Election. We should look at the results and whether they justified the expenditure and effort. In recent times we have not had the same effect: amount of Party effort has declined, minute votes we get. Committee gives no details of work done in Bolton or Islington. A lot could be done without a candidate and the expense contemplated used for national advertising and perhaps publication of large number of manifestoes for countrywide distribution.

RESOLUTION - C. Slapper and Morgan (Islington): "That this Conference is in favour of contesting at least two Parliamentary constituencies at the next general election and that the EC be recommended to give urgent consideration to plans for a national campaign leading up to and during the election."

C. Slapper (Islington): Drew attention to the D of P re electoral activity. If we waited to win elections that time would never arise. Objections to standing alongside 'nut-cases': we do not distinguish between those and the usual political candidates. The time is more right now than ever before. It is a reflection on the voters that we get few votes. Those who disagree with the floor resolution, if carried, must enter into the full implementation of that decision.

Vanni (Glasgow): The Party should have learned what May and his branch have learned. Experience shows we do not get publicity or new members through electoral activity - we

1970-79
get disillusion. A tremendous waste of time, energy and money. The only time it was worthwhile was 1945 because of peculiar circumstances of the time.

AMENDMENT - Lawrence (Croydon) and Simpson (Camden): "Delete 'two' and insert 'one'."

Simpson (Camden): If one constituency contested effort would be concentrated.

Coleman (EC): Some of the one-man candidates are out to do more than the conventional politicians. They are taking advantage of democracy. Islington has doubled its membership as a result of political activity in its area. If we are wasting our time you can rule out all these efforts. We are putting forward our case when a majority are not agreeing. Whatever we do now the success will not be as great as we would like, and it will not be cost-efficient. General elections are a time of heightened political interest. A lot has got to do with your own political optimism or pessimism. Islington are running meetings on subjects which workers are interested in, people have attended, come to more meetings and joined. Perhaps N.W. London are feeling a bit depressed and politically isolated.

Cottis (Southend): I agree with May, 1945 was a good year - today not so good. If you regard Parliamentary work as an on-going affair, you are going to hold your own and produce results. We do spend money which falls upon stoney ground in other directions, and Parliamentary activity is no exception.

Lawrence (Croydon): We tend to judge the impact of what we do solely in terms of increase in membership. I am surprised at the extent to which the Party is known. May and Vanni's pessimistic views of Parliamentary activity are not justified. It is difficult to judge the impact or state of development of political ideas. We can continually test this, as well as developing our existence as a political organisation by engaging from time to time in parliamentary activity.

Dufton (Parliamentary Committee): Very disheartening to hear comments of experienced members like May and Vanni. If enthusiasm is infectious, so is despondency. Conference should be an occasion for injecting enthusiasm in the membership as a whole. Islington is exceptionally enthusiastic: a lot of hard work being done on a regular basis.

Edwards (West London): If a branch is keen to contest, they should be encouraged. Where we have been wrong in the past is to be committed to contesting a certain number.

Sansum (S.W. London): No lack of enthusiasm in S.W. London branch. I think it premature to contest Parliamentary (as opposed to local or other) elections. We could go to assist at Islington. This would be at the cost of going to other Parliamentary activity where other parties are.

May (N.W. London): There is a Conference instructed resolution that we contest the next general election. Not opposed to Parliamentary activity in principle: I don't know a member who is opposed to it, but we don't have to kowtow to any questioner on the platform by having to put up a candidate. The time for Bolton to contest is when it has enough members to do the work they are doing as well as contesting an election. I enjoyed the work I did in the past at elections. The sort of 'nut-case' candidates mentioned make our work more difficult. Islington's success is due to political activity - they seem to have their finger on the right button. Interest in the Party doesn't necessarily spring from Parliamentary activity. The Parliamentary Committee can approach older members for help. I shall be in Islington at the next election, as I was last time but we still have to ask ourselves when it is all over whether it was worthwhile. Could we have done something else at the same cost which might bring Socialism nearer?

C. Slapper (Islington): We would like the EC to instigate a national campaign and persuade another branch to stand. Reasons for contesting are propaganda and publicity; then there is Clause 6 of the D of P. We test the situation and see what we are up against. For all the work Southend did, for an extra £150 they could have combined propaganda and publicity.

AMENDMENT CARRIED 17 - 6; SUB.-RESOLUTION CARRIED 22 -1

PARTY FUNDS ORGANISER:

Morgan (Islington): Wished to stress the need for a Party Funds Organiser and suggested means of raising funds could include draws and competitions. We should be increasing our activities and funds as well, not reducing activities because of lack of funds.

Cook (Birmingham): Numbers of members made regular contributions, some through Bank standing order - his still being paid - and these payments were hardly noticed by the members concerned. When the particular emergency was over, members stopped paying. Could be a relatively painless way of raising funds.

RESOLUTION - C. Slapper and Morgan (Islington): "That Branches with funds surplus to their requirements should make the amounts available to other branches or Head Office."

C. Slapper (Islington): Question was raised at ADM 1982 of branches which had large funds but were undertaking very little activity according to Forms 'C'. Situation same in current Form 'C'. Branches should determine their needs and redistribute their wealth.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Branch had bills outstanding at half-year and again now. Literature and dues are paid every six months. Whilst the Party has money I don't think you can ask branches to send money to H.O. It would only be in the H.O. Bank instead of the Branch bank. We hold meetings and spend on leafleting etc.

Deutz (East London): Branches can appear to have money but have outstanding bills.
Coleman (EC): Why are we having forms giving incorrect picture? Perhaps the Form 'C' should be redrafted.

Sansum (S.W. London): Branch spent £100 on the debate with the Conservative Party and two further debates are planned, so at present is not in possession of a surplus.

Hopwood (Croydon): I can't believe that N.W. London, having a large balance at the beginning of the year, still have one, whatever activities are being undertaken.

H. Moss (Swansea): Thought it an abuse of Conference time to bring up matters by floor resolutions which were not urgent. Delegates have no mandates and this is an extremely trivial item.

C. Slapper (Islington): Branch doesn't think it trivial. Islington's activities are outstripping its funds. If a branch has funds not being used at present it could channel them into other branches' activities.

RESOLUTION LOST 6 - 10

ADJOURNMENT 6 p.m.

SUNDAY 3rd APRIL - 10.20 a.m.

PARTY PRESS OFFICER: Post not filled.

Atkinson (General Secretary): When we had a Party Press Officer, so many letters to the Press were rejected that it was considered a waste of time.

Cook (Birmingham): Can Gen. Sec. cope with anything in that direction?

Atkinson: Yes.

Bradley (Haringey): There should be a Party, and Branch, Press Officers who must work in a co-ordinated way. Important that letters are seen by editorial people even if not published.

H. Moss (Swansea): I was Party Press Officer and found it a waste of energy. I felt letters were not published because they were from a Party official.

C. Slapper (Islington): Members have had some success in having letters published in various journals and papers. It is hard to prove what Moss says - it's hard to get letters published anyway. A Press Officer need not even write to the press - a member could write a letter, get the approval of the Press Officer and send it as from the P.O.
Lawrence (Croydon): Our publicity etc. is very fragmented.

Delegates then agreed to continue this discussion along with Propaganda and Publicity.

PREMISES COMMITTEE:

SOUTHEND RESOLUTION:

Cottis (Southend): We don't aim at members agreeing to dispose of H.O. We know members, the EC and committees meet there and we have a large and useful property. The initial enthusiasm has tended to fade. Southend thinks it would not be amiss to think of the better utilisation of H.O. in the first instance. In the course of looking at this, it may be as well to consider finding smaller premises.

C. Slapper (Islington): We support the motion because H.O. very much under-used, particularly in the way of propaganda activity. The branch which meets there doesn't seem to be doing better than any other branch, bearing in mind that they don't pay rent. We should consider obtaining more centrally placed H.O. to become less of an administrative centre.

D. Davies (N.W. London): We oppose this as a study to sell H.O. is not right at this time. The price we could get would not buy anything in Central London. We would like H.O. to be more used. Propaganda Committee haven't used it much.

Atkinson (General Secretary): The study will be a waste of time. H.O. being used three days a week now. What is required is decorating and cleaning: S.W. London Branch being given more support to be more active, as it is in a highly concentrated working class area. More people are calling in during the day and phone calls as well. Looked at realistically, HO is too small. If we had a room the size of this Hall, we wouldn't have to hire one for Conference. We should encourage members to use H.O.

Hopwood (Croydon): One reason HO under-used is that it is cold and the heating is costly and inefficient. However, it is being used more: sometimes committees haven't got room to work.

Coleman (EC/Propaganda Committee): There have been Saturday night meetings at HO in relation to the Marx Centenary but in the end visitors weren't coming, or members either. A lot of members don't like walking through that area late at night. HO should be in an area easily accessible from both sides of London. If we had a pub with drinks downstairs and offices upstairs it would be used and this a serious suggestion.

H. Walters (Islington): We used to rent accommodation but rents were vastly increased. HO cost about £6,000; it was a broken down place and a lot of time has been spent getting it into order. The premises are nowhere near large enough for the administrative and other functions - storing literature etc. No practicality in what Coleman has said. No security in renting property. We would be likely to be looking at Kings Cross etc., which is a lot worse than Clapham. We need facilities for printing, library, as well. HO is being under-used. If we get better premises are members going to come or stay

away? It is not the premises which is the trouble; it is the reluctance of members to use the place.

Lawrence (Croydon): Is the location such that the great majority of London members cannot get there and if in a different position, members would use it more? That is the only thing to look at.

Cottis (Southend): We intended the accent to be on the feasibility study, not on the possibility of selling HO. The more it is used, the more we can clean it up and possibly even consider central heating. It is not particularly out of the way but it is under-used.

SOUTHEND RESOLUTION CARRIED 27 - 11

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION - CROYDON

Atkinson (General Secretary): It may appear that this is a frivolous item but the EC will not face up to this question. We have the members who will do the work. We want a yea or nay from the delegates. Cost would be £1-1,500. Electricity bill over the last quarter was £250, that is using very old heaters which sometimes function and sometimes don't. We will have to pay for new heaters anyway. It would improve the value of the building and once in, it is there for 20 years.

G. Kerr (East London): Worried that so many members wishing to spend our money very quickly. I am sure you are way out on the cost. It would cost a minimum of £5,000. Look at alternative ways of keeping HO reasonably warm, e.g. insulation and covering the glass skylight. You are spending money faster than it is coming in.

C. Slapper (Islington): This could be covered under the terms of the feasibility study.

McLaughlan (Bolton): The feasibility study could report back and we would be in the same position as now. Com. Atkinson has looked at this and presented a figure of £1,000-£1,500: we also have the use of a number of members who know about installing central heating and would be prepared to do it.

Cottis (Southend): Queried running costs of central heating.

Hopwood (Croydon): We have large bills with inefficient heaters now. Members are not aware of this. They think one room can be heated, but the Head Office Assistant does not work in one room only. Central heating doesn't have to be on all the time - there are time-switches and parts can be turned off. If you were working for a private firm in the conditions, you would walk out. EC members who arrive on Tuesday evening and say it's cold, are getting the benefit of the heaters being put on earlier in the day. You should take this more seriously.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - Edwards (West London) and Cook (Birmingham): "That a maximum of £2,000 be spent on centrally heating Head Office."

CARRIED 13 - 8

SSPC:

Vanni (Glasgow): Branch disturbed at big increase in price of SS over past six months. Latest increase out of the blue in March when the February SS had advertised the March SS at same price. Branch have noticed falling-off of sales since last increase.

Although more money will come from the increased price, lower sales would make it self-defeating. If we subsidise anything it must be the SS. Glasgow might have to consider moves to alter the EC's power to increase SS price.

Morgan (Islington): Didn't think it affected sales in Islington. Other publications increase in price as well. Other organisations have the same cost difficulties - it's swings and roundabouts.

G. Kerr (East London): Look at your balance sheet - SS income against costs - you don't have to think about the matter.

Hopwood (Croydon): I know all the arguments for the increase, but Glasgow do sell one-third of the Party's SS.

Cottis (Southend): Compared with equivalent journals, the SS is cheap. I remember a previous occasion when Vanni said at Conference that an increase had not made any difference. It hasn't done so in Southend. We could easily under-sell the SS. It is not the price which deters people from buying it.

McNeeney (EC): Why does any price have to appear on the SS. We could sell it for what we can get. H.O. accounts could be adjusted so that branches who sell a lot could get it cheaper.

Lawrence (Croydon): Size of the SS has increased in recent years. No-one can persuade me that extra pages enhance the effect of the SS. We could cut it down and not lose propaganda effect.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Morgan and C. Atkinson (Islington): "That this Conference congratulates the SSPC on producing an excellent Marx Centenary issue of the SS."

Morgan (Islington): It was an excellent issue and was value for money.

Lawrence (Croydon): I shall vote against this, not because they are not doing a magnificent job, because I know that it is: I am against this type of resolution in general.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Moss (Swansea) and Cottis (Southend): "Next business."

CARRIED 11 -10

Slapper (Islington): Spoke on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee for increasing sales of the SS. Have met a few times and apologised for no written report. They have approached shops and got the EC's approval for a series of display adverts which are currently being designed and submitted. Urged branches to sustain their sales drive following the March SS.

LITERATURE:

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION AND KENSINGTON AMENDMENT:

G. Slapper (Islington): Branch fully in support of the implementation of the proposals in the report of the committee on the proposed international journal. Opposed the delay suggested by Kensington because of the urgency branch feels to start as soon as possible to stimulate the flagging activity of some of our companion parties.

R. Critchfield (Kensington): Branch idea was not to delay matters but to set a time limit. We felt we should frame resolutions very particularly in view of the proposal re EC members' behaviour on the EC.

Cottis (Southend): Can we produce a journal with a real international flavour? Are there sufficient people who can write appropriate articles?

Buick (Haringey): I did not realise when I accepted nomination, what the Committee was to do, and could not attend any of the meetings, but my views were taken into account. I think the journal should appear once a year, not twice.

G. Kerr (East London): No-one can be opposed to helping out overseas comrades, but I must draw attention again to the balance sheet and the larger expenditure over income on the SS. I am wondering if this journal is possible - I understand the American party is almost dead. We could have a twice-yearly special edition of the SS to include contributions from companion parties.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Branch supporting amendment. Very good idea but more information needed. If it isn't going to encourage them to continue with their own efforts, we would prefer them to start their own journal. If they contribute to this and their own journals, we are all for it. Would editorial committee in London have power to alter articles? Distribution going to be difficult for companion parties. We want the committee to report to ADM on some of these points.

Vanni (Glasgow): Glasgow opposed: we don't need it that much. The report by Com. Coleman said that the Canadian members sold hardly any literature. The New Zealand paper too had very little in the way of sales at home. Let's look at the state of world Socialist movement. Isn't it true that most of the companion parties exist in name only? We can't see 1,000 being sold overseas.

Fenton (WSP/US): We are in sad times in the US. Very few active members. We meet regularly, and have come to the conclusion that the most important thing we can do, having no journal now, is to distribute the SS. The SS cover in April would not mean much to us in the US. We discussed having the SS with our own cover. We could not work to the monthly time schedule. We would guarantee £200 per issue and take 500 copies of the international journal. It could take material of a more theoretical way. I think the report is splendid. We would vote to get on with it.

Cook (Birmingham): We tend to be parochial in the SPGB: it would do us a good deal of good to start talking to our fellow workers in other countries. A worldwide journal would help us with overseas visitors.

P. Deutz (Committee member): The idea was to help companion parties. We were not thinking of the theoretical journal which has been rejected by several Conferences. It would have to be produced in this country initially but not for ever. There would have to be material from the companion parties by definition. Material could be edited overseas and looked at again here. Conference would have to decide whether once or twice a year. It would be a second journal here but a first one in the companion parties. It is a joint venture.

Lawrence (Croydon): Fenton certainly impressed on the Conference the need for this journal. I would look forward to replacing the SS at some stage with an international journal. Let's not have reprints from the SS - it needs material which is unique to this journal. I would like to see world aspects of Socialism emphasised.

Coleman (Committee member): Companion parties were consulted about this and gave their views. Two pieces of good news - the WSP of Ireland have a new meeting venue "The People's College" and are meeting twice a month and are very interested in the journal. In Australia the members are holding a conference this weekend. We are the only people who actually can produce a world socialist journal.

Bradley (Haringey): The title we use is important - worldwide rather than international - to emphasise its character - i.e. not a federation of nations. We adopted "worldwide" because of the use of the term "international" by other organisations.

G. Slapper (Islington): The title suggested by the committee is "The World Socialist". Expressed pleasure hearing the contribution from Fenton. The committee based estimates on direct consultations. We should be able to get a return of the cost of production in about six months.

AMENDMENT LOST 12 - 28; RESOLUTION CARRIED 27 - 16

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (4) - KENSINGTON:

R. Critchfield (Kensington): Recent EC discussion re members' letter in the SS which

the SSPC took to be a contribution on a detail of the Falklands war but some members took issue with this. Kensington feels no reason why members should not contribute to discussion. Committee has this month published a schoolgirl's letter which they felt to be worthwhile, but because of recent discussion brought to the EC for decision. The Party should be a bit more relaxed about this.

C. Atkinson (Islington): Branch feels the SS should not become a debating forum; letters from members could go to the Committee for submission to the writer concerned for reply. Cook (Birmingham): Always going to be pros and cons. Members' attitudes vary. A degree of discretion is to the good. We are sufficiently strong not to worry about this. With control, certain amount of members' letters, even with disagreement, is a good thing.

P. Deutz (East London): I understood that members' letters criticising some point of the Party's case would not go into the SS but be discussed in the branch. Sometimes a member's letter can enable the original writer to reply and enlarge on a point. Members might feel able to write a short letter but not an article. I hope Conference would not put any strongpoint of view against members ever writing to the SS.

D. Davies (N.W. London): I personally feel we produce the SS for other people not for ourselves, and therefore print letters from non-members, not members.

Hopwood (Croydon): We have sufficient confidence in the SSPC to leave the matter to their discretion.

C. Slapper (Islington): Present position is a Conference resolution that members' letters do not appear in the SS.

Tenner (SSPC): EC were not able to come up with any Conference resolution. So far as we are concerned, there is no existing ruling. Distinction between a difference of opinion on a point not central to the Party's case and Islington's view about letters critical of an article.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Lawrence (Croydon) and P. Deutz (East London): "This Conference recommends that members' letters be published in the SS at the discretion of the SSPC with priority of space given to non-members' letters"

CARRIED 23 - 3

S.S. SUBSCRIBERS' COMMITTEE:

Atkinson (General Secretary): Branches were asked to report on whether their local libraries took and/or displayed the SS. 6 or 7 replies received saying the SS was not on display but was available on request. A large number of SS being sent out free to libraries. No information re free overseas copies.

Grant (EC): Concerned that the SS being sent out were not being displayed. We should send free SS if they are being displayed but otherwise we should cancel free distribution. Perhaps we could offer display folders and get undertakings that they would be displayed.

Lawrence (Croydon): A lot of disquiet re free copies not being displayed. If not displayed let's stop wasting money.

R. Cox (Guildford): Surrey libraries have a policy that they will display the SS and he felt sure other areas could be persuaded likewise.

Bradley (Haringey): The SS might not be displayed but somebody gets it, has to record it etc. Librarians do learn that there is such a journal. I became a member through a library copy of the SS.

McLaughlan (Bolton): We shouldn't send the SS just to be filed away somewhere. A letter should go out asking whether libraries still want to receive it, whether they display it and whether they will pay for it.

Walker (Edinburgh): The National Library of Scotland takes the SS but it does not display anything; you have to request any material. They have a collection going back to the 1900's including pamphlets. It supplies a record of the Party in Scotland.

McNeeney (EC): Perhaps we should advertise the SS in "Library Journal", which is a world-wide journal going to all libraries, and invite subscriptions.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (1) SWANSEA:

Moss (Swansea): The recently distributed Speakers' Handbook was a good idea but the preface was condescending and raised the question of self-reliance on which membership of the Party is based. It seemed to abdicate the responsibility of knowing if you have enough knowledge to another group of members. Think seriously about doing away with the New Speakers' test, an elitist part of the Party. It is part of the mentality of the capitalist system and has no place in the Party.

Vanni (Glasgow): Don't know why Swansea upset about some members having superior knowledge. Some applicants for membership are nervous at the knowledge test given by Glasgow branch, but just because they are nervous, do we scrap that too? Members don't have to pass the test to speak at all. You can get plenty of experience before taking the test. We urged the EC earlier to appoint two members with an understanding of accountancy to advise on financial matters. Nothing wrong with taking specialist advice. We have used an experienced speaker with a less experienced one on the same platform.

McNeeney (Education Committee): Cannot get away from elitist implications of the New Speakers' Test. Branches set up committee to examine new members, so we examine new speakers. Members on the committee who examined me disagreed on some aspects of the Party's case. If there is another way, OK. We have in mind publication of a speakers'

member arranged for the days for Walker like it FLOOR

Edman (EC): We tried a large indoor meeting on Friday night. 80 people were here - members and 3 outsiders. I think it was a waste of time. The last previous meeting we arranged apart from last Conference was a May Day meeting and it was just as bad. The days for that type of meeting are gone.

Walker (Edinburgh): I think we should be discussing matters which are far more relevant, like items 2 and 3 on the agenda.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - Hopwood (Croydon) and R. Best (Bolton): "That the vote be taken."

CARRIED 21 - 5

N.W. LONDON FLOOR RESOLUTION LOST 4 - 25

G. Slapper (Islington): Queried when branch verbal reports would be taken.

Lawrence (Croydon): Didn't think they were critically important - we all know what is going on through the SS and EC Minutes.

The Chairman stated that there were instructed resolutions yet to be dealt with.

FLOOR RESOLUTION - D. Davies (N.W. London) and Cottis (Southend): "That we do not deal with Branch reports at this time."

CARRIED 20 - 7

Edwards (West London): We wrote to the Publicity Committee re Guardian adverts which are not very eye-catching and suggested it would be better to concentrate the money on larger ones rather than small ones each week.

McLeavy (Publicity): Guardian advert is doing well with 10 or 20 replies each week.

G. Kerr (East London): Asked why these enquiries were not passed on to local branches, and it was stated that they were.

Skelton (Central): We should be using other journals - trade union ones and New Statesman. I have not seen any advertising for the March special issue. We are spending lamentably little. They should have more funds in that respect.

Lawrence (Croydon): Problem is not one of more expenditure - it is a lack of people at HO. We have one member trying to cope with this. He is snowed under and desperately needing help. The steady stream of well-worded adverts produces a steady response and literature is sent. There are come-backs and correspondence which is very important. It is a time-consuming business: it is very productive of new members. We have to seriously think of expanding this vital committee.

Atkinson (Gen. Sec.): EC Minutes reflect work being carried out by the committee.

Advertising in T.U. journals is being tried.

Bradley (Haringey): In about 1968 we had about 7 members on the committee and we were snowed under. The present member is trying to cope with one aspect.

RESOLUTION - Cook (Birmingham) and Moss (Swansea): "That the EC's Report to Conference be adopted."

AGREED

PROPAGANDA AND PUBLICITY: Resolution - Islington:

Coleman (EC/Islington): Opened with permission of delegates. Revolution in means of communication since 1904, when it was verbal and written. Only one regular speaking place - Hyde Park. We have to adapt our propaganda. We have to see what can be achieved in the existing media and look to the creation of a Socialist media. Concerted effort by some members in London produced 8 hours of taped Socialist ideas. Local radio gets to a large audience and needs interesting material, we can get on it. Presenters get to know us and sometimes even put our views across. When they were let down in a debate, we were asked to take part. This should be organised by local branches with a team of members for sustained campaign. The media think in terms of news so we need news events. If we run an education conference we should be on local radio talking about it. We need interesting titles for meetings, posing questions. What a better Conference it would be if next year each branch could report on a media event of some kind. We may need to have training courses and material organised: there are important technical points to bear in mind. There is now much wider use of cassettes and video - maybe the Party should have video. We could tape for and advertise in journals for the blind. Alternative entertainment is another avenue. Other possibilities of pirate broadcasting! Branch suggests the EC commission a detailed report on the setting up of such a scheme. Islington is setting up a two-day education conference on 7th and 8th May to discuss the media.

Cottis (Southend): Trying pirate broadcasting could prove dangerous to the Party.

Cook (Birmingham): Local radio is not well-organised - behind the microphone is absolute chaos - they are desperate for material. Anything interesting we can feed them is likely to be taken up because they consume information at a prodigious rate.

R. Melia (Islington): I think you are giving up if you don't go against authority. Let's have a go. If it gets too heavy, we'll get out.

C. Slapper (Islington): Penalty for illegal broadcasting is a small fine and forfeiture of equipment. Marx's theory being thrown in our faces more than ever now with the development of means of production in the media.

P. Deutz (East London): It seemed a pious resolution. Don't let's get bogged down over pirate radio suggestion. There is plenty to think about here, but with a small

handbook on how to speak, with practical information. A draft has been with a member for 18 months.

Cook (Birmingham): Asked whether the Speakers' Handbook will touch on speaking on radio and TV, which are getting more common and have their own problems.

McNeeney: Yes.

P. Deutz (East London): Rejected anything elitist about it. We want the best representation possible so nothing wrong in examining a speaker. As well as speaking with an experienced speaker, there is experience at branch level or taking the chair at meetings. Passing the speakers' test doesn't mean you know how all the answers.

Goodman (EC): Total irrelevance of some of the questions on the Speakers' Handbook, e.g. on the French Revolution. We must have the knowledge but we need more relevant stuff.

Lawrence (Croydon): My experience of these examinations are that they are not in the least authoritarian but in the nature of a discussion. The question where the examiners fell out is "Do peasants produce surplus value?" That question should be at the top of the list and always asked first.

Grant (EC): It has been assumed that only the examinees are nervous, but having sat on the panels, I have been very nervous. Suggestion was made that there are branches of the Party who don't operate an admission test. I would be very concerned if that was so. Essential that those who are going to enjoy full membership are doing it with the maximum of Socialist knowledge.

Skelton (Central): Swansea confusing ability to express ideas clearly and to be a Party speaker. They might express their ideas but they might not be the Party's case. They might be expressing things which the Party would not agree with. Swansea should note the distinction.

H. Moss (Swansea): Once a member is in the Party he should have the same rights and freedom as any other member. Speakers' test is no good if some members are still not good speakers. If a panel argues then it is a waste of time. You have to trust members. We are interested in the elitist implications of it.

PROPAGANDA, PUBLICITY AND MEDIA:

G. Slapper (Propaganda Committee): Drew attention to a supplementary report relating to the Marx Centenary meetings and filled in details for the Cambridge meeting.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Branch had held a meeting which they arranged themselves. Had not been approached through the Committee.

McLaughlan (for the Committee): All branches were circulated. If N.W. London were not approached, why did they not contact the committee.

Sansum (S.W. London): We thought each branch would have had a sub-title after "What Marx Really Meant" but when the handbill and posters arrived there was no room for a sub-title. We decided to use a poster of our own design.

Hopwood (Croydon): Propaganda report very short. A much greater effort must be made in their report to Conference.

Skelton (Central): Had not been asked if she would be available to speak at these meetings.

Coleman (Propaganda Committee): Report short because information comes via Forms "E". Education conferences go under Education Committee report. Skelton was not asked about doing those meetings because there are a number of speakers, some are asked sometimes, and some are asked other times. She should not worry - her turn will come.

Cottis (Southend): Referred to errors of dates and days in the SS advertising.

Coleman: These were errors on the part of the printers. Branches were notified on the night the SS came out.

McNeeney (Education Committee): Neither the Committee or Education Organiser had anything to do with the weekend schools. This information should come up in the reports of branches. Education Organiser is a dead duck.

D. Davies (N.W. London): Worried that we had no large meetings in Central London last year, except at Conference. We should have a May Day meeting and a floor resolution would be moved.

Coleman (Propaganda): You cannot instruct the public to attend large meetings. You have to get branches to hold these. Islington, S.W. London and other branches have held successful meetings. Grants given to branches have been for propaganda. These large London meetings have been failures in recent times. If we had held one large central Marx Centenary meeting, we might have had 50 non-members turn up, which would have been a success, but with the meetings arranged all over the country, we have had over 350 non-members attending.

FLOOR RESOLUTION: D. Davies and M. Davies (N.W. London): "This Conference strongly recommends the EC to arrange at least 3 large indoor meetings each year in central London."

D. Davies (N.W. London): Of course it's good to have lots of meetings all over the country but we think the Propaganda Committee should be doing more than that.

C. Slapper (Islington): The most important aspect of meetings is to have a follow-up. Branches have a better chance of doing that. People might come to a central London meeting from all over London. Local people come to local meetings.

reser
should
and
Mod
of

170-79

reservation.

Well (EC): We should try to make air time more effective; if we got time on LBC we should advertise it in the Guardian etc.

Dowsett (Islington): Another dimension is the seeming contradiction between what we say and do. To use means of propaganda which are out-dated is completely un-Marxist. Modern technology is its own gravedigger as it gives opportunity for the wider continuance of capitalism, it provides the potential for the enemy of capitalism, namely, us.

D. Davies (N.W. London): When May said yesterday that this was a pious resolution he meant that it did not suggest any action. We feel that outdoor meetings are still useful because you meet people. You have to ring up for hours to local radio and sometimes you don't get on. It needs lots of time.

Skelton (Central): We should try cassettes which should not be too expensive. Phone-ins are useful. Let members say their views instantly and identify their views. There should be training - I would suggest it is the job of the Propaganda Committee.

Hopwood (Croydon): Schools now train 6th Formers to use videos, go on radio, etc. Let's not look back. I think Hyde Park is a terrible place. Lots of Party members now who have time to sit by the phone and can do these things.

Young (EC): I have experience of TV and radio and can use and exploit details of my sordid past. Agree with Cook about local radio.

Coleman (Islington): Pirate radio only mentioned as an option though it could be done. If every one of the other points is taken up we could still say that the resolution has been useful in getting some activity going. We do engage in illegal activities - sticking up posters, selling literature in Hyde Park etc. Democratic rights are not handed on a plate - workers have to strive for them. Dowsett made vital point - we don't get anywhere if we don't make use of the means of communication which gets to hundreds of thousands of people. We don't say give up traditional methods.

ISLINGTON RESOLUTION CARRIED 41 - 2

RESOLUTION HARINGEY: (Publicity)

Bradley (Haringey): A great deal going on in politics in 1983 and 1984: what we have is totally inadequate. Conference should tell the EC to look into this matter and spend more money and effort. Money will be forthcoming if people see we are a sound, capable organisation. We are opposed to an accountancy view and holding back because it seems to be expensive.

C. Slapper (Islington): We agree in principle we should be spending more rather than less on advertising. We would like to hear more concrete proposals which the EC could implement if this is carried.

Bradley (Haringey): A thorough investigation is necessary of the the problems concerning the Party and publicity to produce long and short-term policies. We should deal with the fragmentation which has occurred over the past 10 years in publicity of all kinds with an interlocking membership of publicity with other committees - SSPC, Propaganda, etc., etc. We would like to spend at least three months studying the current political situation and another three months formulating policies, taking the advice and viewpoints of many members so that next year we would have something serious and practical.

HARINGEY RESOLUTION CARRIED 25 - 1

FLOOR RESOLUTION: Lawrence and Hopwood (Croydon): "That this Conference recommends that the EC gives most urgent consideration to expanding the numbers on the Publicity Committee."

Lawrence (Croydon): The EC are complacent about this having gone through the ritual of calling for nominations for committees, and then forgotten it; we wish to generate a sense of urgency and they should concentrate on the real work of getting committees working properly.

FLOOR RESOLUTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION: (2) ISLINGTON AND (3) CROYDON: Committee on Statements on Production for Use.

C. Atkinson (Islington): Branch complimented the committee on the report and suggested that members continue to make contributions on the subject. She deferred opening to the Croydon delegate.

Lawrence (Croydon): This arose at ADM 1982 out of discussion on propaganda. Socialists seem to have been the only people content with advocating a different form of society without saying anything specific or practical about solutions of the problems or organisation of Socialist society. People are interested in this. Easy to make case against capitalism. At no time does this report take itself outside existing society and consider future society. The work arises directly out of our principles. It has been argued that because of rapid changes in society you can't say anything about solutions to problems. Not the case. Socialists are the only people who are in a position to draw up practical proposals and we don't seem to be aware of this. Our argument will become more meaningful if we develop these ideas. The Socialist movement is bound to formulate its programme of action in advance of Socialism. Here is a framework of concepts and a practical example of how this work can develop. I would like to see the Party go in for a series of short pamphlets under separate subject headings under the general title of 'Socialism as a Practical Alternative', covering food production,

housing, extension of health services, democracy.

G. Kerr (East London): The report could with some alterations and additions be made into a pamphlet. We have said something about this - Marx has said something about this - that there is only a limited amount of fertile land - you cannot manufacture more. Less land is cultivated in certain areas under capitalism.

Cook (Birmingham): I find the document extremely valuable with one or two reservations, even though I have been trying to get the Party to do something like this for 20 years. Control of production and distribution needs enormous discussion before we can make public statements, and there is a glib acceptance of input/output analysis. Socialist society can only properly run, not on input/output analysis and on structural democracy of the sort mentioned here, but by free enterprise. We have to answer criticisms on the grounds of centralised planning, and that the only way to run a complex society is with something like a price and market system. We have to show how this price and market system can be replaced but you have to develop something far more to show how it will work. The only way is for every individual and individual production unit to monitor its own response to demands, etc. This is what I mean by free enterprise. The document is an initial contribution to an essential discussion.

McLennan (Bolton): I think there is a paradox in the conservative attitude which members have had in the past about production for use. We have to think on the lines of how we are going to transform the world: we have to take over at all levels of production and look at the practicalities of that and use it as a strength in our argument. We have to encourage the working class to form their own blueprint. We have to use this positive approach which has been sadly lacking in the Party over the years.

R. Melia (Islington): Drew attention to Boyd Orr in 1947 talking of growing wheat in India: we can get to grips with this.

P. Wilson (EC): Welcomed the report. Individual members were thinking along parallel lines, separately. There is a shared recognition of where we are at and what has to be done. This is the very best basis for common endeavour. Those thinking along these lines don't need persuasive reasoning. An indication of the usefulness of this work is the speed with which this report was produced. We are in a strong position to invite the electorate to start filling in the details. I would like to see a manifesto inviting questions on these matters. One way of drawing into this kind of discussion people whose minds are moving in this direction but want to know about practical problems. This report has not been drawn up to spend another 10 years in discussion. We should present it as soon as possible at the next occasion.

F. Simpkins (S.W. London): Personally I am very much in favour of this and the members are to be congratulated on producing this in a very short time. These proposals are what Socialism is all about. We have not in the past wanted to face up to the details of what a change in society would be about. We cannot give a blueprint in an absolute sense. There will be problems in the initial stage. We may have to forego things in the common good. This should be got out as a party pamphlet. Let's be bold and say this is what Socialism is all about. I don't think I would now join the Party based on a few principles - I would want to know these things.

Bradley (Haringey/the Committee): Cook's caution has some justification and we could be a little premature in producing extensive literature based on this report. There is a great deal more discussion to be carried out.

H. Moss (Swansea): Immensely impressed by the document. Members should read it and encourage other members to read it. More and more questions are about practical things, and people are interested in immediate issues. This document puts the Socialist solution as an immediate issue and this is very important. It should be used as propaganda, either verbal or written.

Edwards (West London): How can we lay down how society will organise in a Socialist society. It is a good report but relates to one aspect. It is OK to deal with the obvious urgent necessities, but traffic, how the family will be organised, etc. we cannot deal with.

McNeeney (EC): It seems a small revolution has taken place on the consciousness of the SPGB. A very good document. Hopefully Socialism is in the air at long last and this is the sort of thing the Party now wants. Good. A note of caution: other organisations, reformist, etc., could make use of statements in this document. It is a risk. Some of the statements can be agreed with if taken out of context.

Coleman (EC): A very valuable document which we needed. Far from looking at a centrally planned system, it points out exactly how we can escape such a system. Workers are interested in the future. We are not talking futuristically but about the future and in the future tense necessarily. We say the workers will have to want to establish socialism: at the moment we are the only workers who want to establish it.

Buick (Haringey): There seems to be general agreement that it is an excellent document and already good propaganda for the Party. Cook mentioned putting forward ideas 20 years ago. I suggest he makes his papers available to the Party as a contribution to this discussion. Com. Simpkins also produced a document which was not taken seriously, but the climate seems to have changed.

Cook (Birmingham): Not sure what he produced in the past would fit into the Party now.

Grant (EC): There is nothing new in speculation of future society. We are in a useful position to couple attention to possible and likely technological changes with the far more significant social changes that we propose in relation to them.

RESOLUTION: Lawrence and Hopwood (Croydon): "That this Conference recommends that a series of texts be prepared under the general title "Socialism as a Practical Alternative" to be made available for the widest Party consideration with a view to publication. The texts to be prepared in accordance with the working method adopted by the Committee on Production for Use."

P. Deutz (East London/the Committee): Although the committee thought that at some stage we should have a pamphlet based on this report, I think this resolution a little premature.

Sansum (S.W. London): Some branch members have read the report but branch has not discussed it. Clearly there will be a lot of feedback when delegates report back to branches. I will oppose the resolution because it is premature, though the papers produced are excellent.

G. Kerr (East London): It's premature: why not leave this text for discussion.

Hopwood (Croydon): The Committee worked very hard and still people have not read it. We are afraid it may just become part of the archives of the Party and are saying that something must be done about it.

Lawrence: (Croydon and the Committee): If we don't pass this resolution all work on this will be effectively stopped. The Committee has completed its work, but I would be more than keen to carry on with the work.

FLOOR RESOLUTION CARRIED 20 - 4

A motion of thanks to the comrades who worked in the Canteen throughout Conference was moved by P. Deutz (East London) and H. Cottis (Southend) and AGREED.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 6.30 p.m.

A. Atkinson
General Secretary

26th April 1983